

BOOKS

Tank Aces by Ralph Zumbro. Pocket Books, New York, N.Y., 1997. 373 pages. \$6.50 paperback.

When I saw *Tank Aces* in the bookstore, I bought it without hesitation. I based this impulse on my enjoyment of Mr. Zumbro's previous work, *Tank Sergeant*, which told the story of the 1st Battalion, 69th Armor in Vietnam. I liked that book so much I made it required reading for the NCOs in my platoon. *Tank Aces*, however, did not live up to my expectations. It is an anthology of primary historical vignettes that covers the entire history of America's armored forces. The vignettes are well-chosen, informative, and moving. They are ideal for professional reading and development. It is the author's unprofessional style and lack of documentation in his narrative framework that detracts from *Tank Aces*. Should you buy it? For \$6.50, yes, you should.

Mr. Zumbro is a former tanker who served with the 1st Battalion, 69th Armor in Vietnam. His prior book, *Tank Sergeant*, is a personal memoir of his experiences in Vietnam. Being a combat veteran makes one qualified to have and tell a story (sometimes with the help of a professional writer); it does not make one qualified to compile and narrate a historical work. Mr. Zumbro's reach exceeded his grasp in *Tank Aces*.

Tank Aces opens with a short prologue that foreshadows Mr. Zumbro's emotional and provincial writing style. The following chapters cover American armored forces through their experiences in World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and Somalia. The historical vignettes are varied, interesting, and full of lessons learned about every type of armored warfare. There are stories from drivers, loaders, gunners, tank commanders, platoon leaders, company and battalion commanders, among others. The stories are drawn from professional journals, magazines, manuscripts, and personal interviews.

Each chapter contains a narrative of the historical background of each conflict to support the vignettes. In this framework that detracts from the enjoyment of *Tank Aces*.

Objectivity in history is not always possible, but it should be a goal. Zumbro uses propaganda-like phrases such as, "burned the Sons of Nippon out of heavy cover and roasted them" and "Hitler's 'Thousand Year Reich' was about to be terminated with extreme prejudice" — hardly professional or necessary. The author also devotes an extensive amount of attention to the German and Japanese nuclear research programs and the exchange of information between the two countries. I am not an expert on the topic, but his assertions are not backed by any documentation, and I don't know where he got his information.

Provincialism in the military is hard to escape: we all think we are in the best branch, battalion, company, platoon, tank crew, etc. This attitude is good for morale, but I think we all realize that whatever branch or unit we are in, we are part of a bigger team. Mr. Zumbro's book leaves the reader with the impression that the armored force is more than "The Combat Arm of Decision:" we are all "Tank Aces... a force of heroes."

My advice: buy the book, but skip the author's narration and read the vignettes!

CPT JERRY A. HALL
Ft. Knox, Ky.

The Raiders of 1862 by James D. Brewer, Praeger Publishers, 1997. 206 pages. \$39.95 hardcover.

Nothing succeeds so well as a bold plan executed with audacity, and in 1862, Confederate cavalry raids were not only bold and audacious, but successful as well, especially those in the Civil War's western theater. Tactical cavalry raids behind Union lines had significant strategic impact, disrupting Yankee plans, destroying supplies and lines of communication, defeating Union forces, and raising Yankee blood pressure and hysteria in the west.

Three of these Confederate cavalry raids in 1862 are superbly showcased in James Brewer's thoughtful and comprehensive analysis, *The Raiders of 1862*. Brewer is a noted Civil War historian, reenactor and author, with works of Civil War fiction and nonfiction to his credit. He is also a retired Army officer, and readers may recognize him as a former editor-in-chief of *ARMOR* Magazine. With this work, Brewer combines his skills as a researcher and storyteller, producing a well-crafted and compelling historical analysis of the dash and daring of the South's cavalry raids.

As Civil War stories go, few are more romantic and inspiring than those of the cavalry. Glory, danger, and prestige all contributed to the colorful image of the mounted cavalier, especially Southern cavalry. Brewer has selected the raids of three of the South's most successful cavalry leaders — Frank C. Armstrong's raid into western Tennessee in August-September 1862, Nathan Bedford Forrest's raid in west Tennessee in December, and John Hunt Morgan's Christmas raid into central Kentucky.

Brewer chronicles each raid with an analytical eye on the mission, intelligence, terrain, tactics, leadership, and the fog of war which made all such cavalry operations fluid indeed. Additional factors considered include the roles of railroads, reconnaissance, artillery, weather, and deception operations. Of course, luck, confusion, mistakes and

missed opportunities also played important roles for both Confederate and Union forces during these cavalry raids.

Brigadier General Frank Armstrong was the only general officer to have fought for both sides in the Civil War, first as a Union captain at Bull Run. In 1862 he was a Confederate cavalry commander leading 2,700 men into western Tennessee to disrupt and occupy the attention of Grant's and Rosecrans' forces, allowing Confederate General Bragg to invade Kentucky. Initially, his raid was very successful, as his cavalymen destroyed railroads, harassed Union troops and threatened a major Union supply center. Missed chances and some tactical errors, however, soon had Armstrong struggling to avoid encirclement and defeat. Never was the cavalry raider's dilemma more true — getting behind the enemy was always easier than getting out.

General Forrest was known as "The Wizard of the Saddle," for his tactical skills and ferocity in battle. His winter raid into west Tennessee was designed to destroy Grant's supply lines into Mississippi in order to relieve pressure on besieged Vicksburg. Leading 3,000 men with two guns, and riding in miserable December weather, Forrest exploited every opportunity to outmaneuver, mislead, confuse, disrupt, and destroy Union forces, facilities, railroads and supply centers. Even the redoubtable General Grant was flummoxed by Forrest's "bluff and dash," to move fast, strike hard, envelop, deceive, and demand surrender. But Forrest gets surprised when an unexpected Union force attacks his rear.

In central Kentucky, Brigadier General John Hunt Morgan's Christmas raid was intended to disrupt General Rosecrans' supply lines to Nashville, buying time for repositioning of Confederate forces. With 4,000 men and seven guns, Morgan truly combined mobility and firepower, relying on speed and shock as combat multipliers. Morgan was also one of the first to employ electronic warfare, tapping into telegraph lines to taunt, mislead, and confound Union forces. Aggressive offensive action, spiced with Morgan's own brand of "bluff and dash," made this raid of destruction particularly successful.

Union forces and their reactions are analyzed as well, with a balanced appraisal of their leadership, movements, blunders, and obstacles to countering the Confederate raiders. This book is an excellent advocate for daring cavalry operations even today. With this study completed, it would be most interesting to see a similar book on selected Union cavalry raids, like Colonel Ben Grierson's raid through Mississippi and General James H. Wilson's raid of Selma, Alabama.

COL WILLIAM D. BUSHNELL
USMC, Retired
Sebascodegan Island, Maine

Before The Rain, directed by Milcho Manchevski. Starring Rade Serbedzija, Katrn Cartlidge. Running Time 112 minutes. PolyGram Video.

Modern technology makes briefing the soldier on the topography of Bosnia a relatively easy task. Satellite imagery, digital mapping, videos, even pictures of soldiers' actual accommodations can be part of predeployment training sessions. But it is almost impossible to capture the feelings of the Bosnians, whether Catholic (Croatian), Serbian Orthodox (Serb), or Muslim, which drove them to mutilate such a beautiful country, destroying in the process historically priceless structures, while committing such outrageous atrocities on neighbors that there is little hope for reconciliation, perhaps for generations. It is a training challenge to portray the sentiments of the people who live in Bosnia for those about to serve there.

This challenge can be met by a recent movie, *Before The Rain*. It does not follow a chronology. It does not have a happy ending. It is really three stories wound together. Made by Macedonians to describe the situation in Macedonia as of 1994, the film was nominated for an Academy Award, so it is accessible to most audiences. The film does provide insight into the mindset of the inhabitants of the Former Yugoslavia. While the ethnic composition in Macedonia is not exactly the same, the problems and the feelings are.

The first story revolves around the dilemma of a young monk in an Orthodox monastery faced with the question of whether to shelter a young Muslim girl fleeing from a vigilante mob. The insignificant role of religion in the ethnic struggle is clearly shown. Although religion provides an identifying label, acting in accordance with religious tenets is not part of the scene.

The second story may seem to have little to do with Bosnia or even Macedonia. There is, however, reference to Bosnia which indicates the disregard for human life which has affected the participants. Meaningless violence can reach a modern European city, as is made clear in this sequence. Important to the overall portrait, this particular story also brings home the point that people's feelings and determination to kill don't stay behind at frontiers.

The final story outlines the attempt of an individual to reconcile the two warring communities. It is important to note what role, if any, that the players from the outside world have. Conspicuous by their absence from this chronicle are organs of local government, the police, or the church.

An important question to ask the audience is what would motivate a brother to kill his sister or a cousin to kill his cousin? Belligerents do not kill their opponents in this film. The members of each community kill their

own! This is how the Macedonian filmmakers saw Macedonia, and their former country of Yugoslavia in 1994.

After three months service in Macedonia (1993) and nine months in Sarajevo (1993/94), I could relate to this film, as have many of my colleagues. One can conclude a viewing by emphasizing that, at least in the minds of these Macedonians, their communities had lost the capacity for reconciliation. For there to be a positive ending to ethnic conflict, at least in the view of the filmmakers, outside intervention such as SFOR would appear to be necessary.

MAJOR ROY THOMAS
Peace Support Training Centre
Kingston, Ontario

Civil War Generalship: The Art of Command by W.J. Wood, Praeger Publishers, Westport, Conn., 1997. 269 pages. \$59.95.

The subtitle hints that this book may be of value to other than Civil War buffs, and so it is. The art of senior level command may change somewhat from war to war, but the principles remain the same. In fact, as the post-Cold War U.S. Army once again faces the reduction in size so typical of post-war periods, the study of the challenges of senior leadership in a rapidly expanding Army seems a good investment of time and effort.

When the Civil War broke out, few officers in the U.S. Army had experienced command of more than small units in the field. Serving mostly as company and battery officers in the Mexican War and on the pre-Civil War western frontier, both Union and Confederate newly promoted general officers suddenly found themselves in command of untrained masses of recruits. Nor could the senior ranks of either army be filled with even this level of experience. As a result, officers were appointed to senior positions with no military experience, with commissions based on the ability to recruit or to exercise political influence. Meanwhile, military tactics had not progressed significantly since the Napoleonic Wars of a half-century earlier. Thus, the influence of the rifled bore, with the increase in effective range it brought, was not reflected in tactics. Clearly, Civil War generals were faced with awesome challenges.

In this study of Civil War generalship, author Wood has selected three battles to illustrate the challenges and how the six generals on both sides faced them. He has selected well and analyzed each battle and its generals in a detailed and perceptive way. To lay the groundwork for his analyses, he begins the three-part book with a background discussion that includes an overview of Civil War tactics, a discussion of the Napoleonic lessons reflected in the Civil War, and a brief

generalization of the art of command. The second part is a discussion of each of the three battles selected: Cedar Mountain, Chickamauga, and Nashville. In the third part, Wood reflects on the performance of each of the generals.

The battle at Cedar Mountain, Virginia, was a minor one in significance compared with the Seven Days and Second Bull Run before and after. Major General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was charged by General Robert E. Lee in August of 1862 with crushing General John Pope, as he advanced south from Washington, before Pope could be joined by General George B. McClellan withdrawing from the Peninsula. It was at Cedar Creek that Jackson met Pope's lead corps, commanded by Major General Nathaniel Banks. How Jackson and Banks, the former already famous from his successful Shenandoah Valley campaign, the latter a competent businessman and politician, but inexperienced militarily, met the challenges each faced forms the basis for Wood's analysis. Initially successful, Banks quickly fell victim to the superior generalship of Jackson.

In the second example, Major General William S. Rosecrans, crossing the Tennessee and maneuvering General Braxton Bragg out of Chattanooga, found that his enemy, far from retreating south, was prepared to fight him along Chickamauga Creek. While neither general himself fought the battle particularly well, two awful days of fighting left the Confederates in possession of the battlefield and the Union forces back in Chattanooga.

In the third example, Wood discusses the last great Confederate gamble in the west, when General John B. Hood attempted to draw the Union forces out of Georgia by attacking north against the Union lines of communication. This effort brought him to Nashville, where he faced Major General George H. Thomas. Hood was defeated in what became almost a battle of annihilation for the Confederate Army of Tennessee.

In each case, Wood has provided great insight into the performance of the six commanding generals. He traces the background of each and shows how each was a product of his environment. He provides the logic of command decisions by careful presentation of the circumstances facing the generals as they were called on to make their decisions.

The book is not a study of battles; it is a study of generals. The battles merely provide the vehicle for the study of senior leadership in the Civil War. The examples chosen are excellent, providing a fascinating variety of talent and performance. The book is not only a unique and significant contribution to Civil War literature, but should endure as a study of the timeless art of senior leadership as well.

PHILIP L. BOLTÉ
BG, USA, Ret.